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ABSTRACT

The construct of motive to avoid success (Horner, 1969) accounts for differences in achievement motivation between sexes due, hypothetically, to conflicts encountered by women when competing with men. However, recent research suggests that some men also fear success. The present study investigated socio-cultural correlates differentiating persons who fear success from those who do not, using high school seniors who typically face conflicts and anxieties regarding their educational, vocational, and marital futures. The dispersion of socio-cultural characteristics was assumed to be greater for this relatively heterogenous group, thereby providing data to meet statistical assumptions which would enable generalizations to be made about a larger segment of the population. Selected intellectual, socio-economic, aspirational and psychological variables--shown to be related to achievement motivation--were collected. Students fearing success had: (a) higher IQ scores, (b) more educated fathers, (c) greater resultant achievement motivation, and (d) more non-traditional attitudes toward women, but (e) less fear of social rejection than their counterparts. The first four findings are supportive of research so far while the last one is not. It was hypothesized that Ss showing less fear of social rejection felt free to attribute fear of success to the cue-subject whereas their counterparts sympathized with the cue-subject. (Author)

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Achievement Motivation Correlates in Students Showing Fear of Success Imagery

Theoretical Framework

The construct of motive to avoid success (M_{as}) was devised by Horner (1968) to account for differences in achievement motivation between men and women. M_{as} was conceptualized as a disposition, more commonly found among women, to feel negative consequences or affect following success. These feelings are attributed to sex role standards, fear of social rejection, need for affiliation, and similar psychological and socio-cultural variables. In Horner's study, M_{as} accounted for the lack of predictive strength in achievement motivation for women. M_{as} was measured via fear of success imagery (FSI) exhibited by subjects toward a verbal cue. However, recent research (Alper, 1974; Feather and Raphelson, 1974; Feather and Simon, 1973; Heilbrun et al., 1974; Monahan et al., 1974; and Robbins and Robbins, 1973) shows that men also exhibit FSI in stories they write about M_{as} verbal cues and that the incidence of FSI in men's stories is increasing.

Statement of the Problem

The present study sought to determine socio-cultural correlates that differentiated persons who showed FSI from those who did not. Most previous studies of FSI have used college

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students as their sample, a relatively homogeneous and atypical group. In the present study, high school seniors were used. These students, as a group, face major decisions regarding their educational, vocational, and marital futures and, hence, typically face all the conflicts and anxieties associated with achievement motivation. Furthermore, it was expected that the dispersion of socio-cultural characteristics would be greater for this group, thereby providing data to meet statistical assumptions which would enable generalizations to be made about a larger segment of the population. Therefore, an investigation of M_{as} as it related to intellectual, socio-economic, aspirational, and psychological variables among high school seniors who showed FSI and those who did not was the major focus of the present study.

Sample Data

The sample consisted of 218 male and 241 female seniors from a predominantly white and lower- to middle-class mid-western suburban high school. For each of the students the following achievement-motivation-related data were collected.

1. Intellectual variables consisting of IQ scores and GPA were obtained from the school records.

2. Socio-economic variables were determined from the educational and occupational levels of the father and mother reported by the students. Each parent's educational level was based on the number of years of formal education attained. A rating from one to five was allotted to each

3.

of the progressive educational levels. Each parent's occupational status was rated from one to six based on Anne Roe's (1956) vertical classification system.

3. Aspirational variables were derived from a personal data sheet completed by each participant in the study. The data sheet requested information on the student's marital, occupational and educational plans; the student's perceptions of his parent's expectations of his occupational and educational plans; and the student's perceptions of his occupational and educational plans as perceived by his boyfriend/girlfriend.

The marital plan of each student was determined by his selection from a series of six progressive statements ranging from no marriage plans to definite marriage plans within six months. These statements were scored from one to six.

Each student's educational plans were determined by the amount of additional educational preparation he/she expected to attain. Hence, plans of not studying beyond high school, pursuing two-year and four-year programs beyond high school were rated as one, two and three respectively. The same ratings were also applied to the student's perceptions of how his parents and his boyfriend/girlfriend envisioned his educational plans.

The student's vocational plan was based on his/her desire for independence through self-employment. Hence, no work, part-time work, and full-time work were rated

successively from one to three. The same ratings were also accorded to the student's perceptions of how his parents and his boyfriend/girlfriend envisioned his occupational plans.

4. Psychological variables were obtained from a battery of instruments administered to the students. Resultant achievement motivation was measured by Mehrabian's (1969) "Measures of Achieving Tendency;" fear of social rejection by "The Sensitivity to Rejection Scale," by Mehrabian and Ksionzky (1970); and non-traditional attitudes toward women by "Attitude Toward Women Scale," by Spence, Helmreich, and Stapp (1973).

e. Motive to avoid Success -- indicated by fear of success shown in S's stories written in response to one of the following verbal cues: "At the end of the first term finals, Bill (Susan) finds himself (herself) at the top of his (her) engineering class." A random half of the females were given the "Bill" cue and the other half the "Susan" cue.

Analyses of variance were computed using the student's sex and incidence of M_{as} as factors. The dependent variables were each of the intellectual, socio-economic, aspirational, and psychological variables listed above. The dependent variables for which significant differences in FSI incidence were found were subsequently used as independent variables in a discriminant analysis to determine how well the variables would separate the students into two groups--those who showed FSI and those who did not.

Results

The results of the study (Tables 1 & 2) indicated that both

Insert Table 1 about here

male and female students who showed FSI, compared to those who did not show FSI, had higher IQ scores ($p < .01$), fathers with higher educational levels ($p < .05$), less fear of social rejection ($p < .01$), greater resultant achievement motivation ($p < .05$), and more non-traditional attitudes toward women ($p < .05$). Since these characteristics provided a tentative profile of students who showed FSI, they were used as independent variables in a discriminant analysis. The Mahalanobis D^2 (Winer, 1971, p. 845) was highly significant ($p < .00001$), indicating that the independent variables used in the analysis were valid for discriminating students according to the presence or absence of FSI they exhibited.

Discussion

The socio-cultural correlates of M_{as} identified in the present study support the M_{as} construct of Horner in several ways. Intelligent students with higher need for achievement were motivated to compete and achieve, and therefore, they were faced with anxieties and conflicts about success. Students who had fathers with higher educational levels were likely to be exposed at home to more ambition, upward mobility, and competition than those students with less educated fathers. Therefore, they might be expected to project more anxieties related to success. For those students who showed more non-traditional attitudes toward women, competition with both sexes is more of a possibility. Perhaps this explains why they showed more FSI than those students having traditional attitudes toward women.

The lower scores on fear of social rejection by students showing FSI appear contrary, however, to the M_{as} construct conceptualized by Horner. She hypothesized that fear of rejection would contribute to the anxieties associated with Mas. In that case, students indicating FSI should be expected to show more fear of rejection rather than less. The writers hypothesize that those students who had less fear of social rejection felt free to attribute fear of success to the cue-subject, whereas those who feared social rejection did not want to do so or sympathized with the cue-subject and projected no fear of success imagery. In any event, this contradiction suggests a need for further investigation into the relationship between FSI and fear of social rejection.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Significant Variables By Incidence of FSI

Dependent variable	Group	n	Mean	SD
IQ	Students showing FSI	245	109.14	11.44
	Students not showing FSI	140	105.47	12.98
Father's educational level	Students showing FSI	274	2.51	1.32
	Students not showing FSI	162	2.24	1.22
MMAT	Students showing FSI	276	133.08	20.71
	Students not showing FSI	165	129.18	18.26
AWS	Students showing FSI	277	134.93	17.48
	Students not showing FSI	167	131.41	17.35
SRS	Students showing FSI	278	127.57	20.17
	Students not showing FSI	167	133.10	21.47

Table 2

Summary Table of ANOVA for Significant Variables
By Incidence of FSI

Dependent variable	Source of variation	df	MS	F ratio
IQ	FSI incidence	1	1198.22	8.25**
	Within	383	145.23	
Father's educational level	FSI incidence	1	7.57	5.87*
	Within	434	1.29	
NEAT	FSI incidence	1	1566.05	3.97*
	Within	439	394.92	
AWS	FSI incidence	1	1291.37	4.24*
	Within	442	305.31	
SRS	FSI incidence	1	3190.28	7.44**
	Within	443	428.93	

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

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